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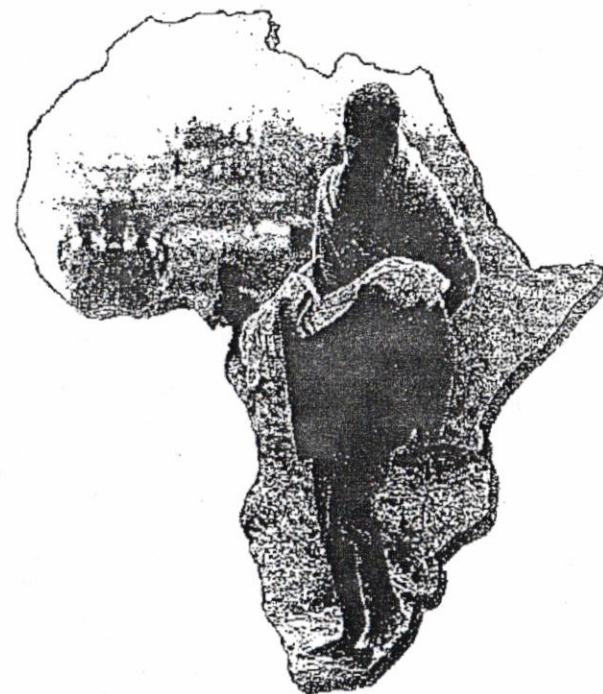
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# ANARCHISM AND REVOLUTION IN BLACK AFRICA



By Stephen P. Halbrook

Reprinted from *The Journal of Contemporary Revolutions*

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Black Africa has a centuries old anarchist tradition. After years of imperialist aggression, which led to the complete carving up of the continent at the hands of the white "master race", this tradition was temporarily harnessed. The ancient liberties of Africans under the rule of the "free world" were smashed, while the attempt was made to impose upon them white dictatorships in the Western tradition. But the spirit of rebellion is irrepressible, and frequently "the natives get restless." Three of the most significant recent occasions of this restlessness are: the Mau Mau Revolution, the Biafran Revolution, and the current liberation movement in "Portuguese" Guinea.

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The Mau Mau Revolution was one of the greatest upheavals in African history. It was the expression of centuries of anarchism and resistance to authoritarianism among the Kikuyu people, the native inhabitants of Kenya. Except for parts of Uganda, which had a system of rule by hereditary despotic chiefs, all of the East African tribes lived in radically democratic societies prior to the coming of the white man. [1] Originally governed by a king, centuries ago the Kikuyu through popular rebellion literally abolished the State, substituting a voluntary society. According to Jomo Kenyatta, a founder of Mau Mau, the new system had such rules as: "Socially and politically all circumcised men and women should be equally full members of the tribe, and thereby the status of a king or nobleman should be abolished." It consisted of a federation of councils, beginning with the members of the family (the basic economic unit of land ownership), extending to the village, then to the district, and ending on a national level. The right to recall representatives from the different councils was absolute: "... in fact, it was the voice of the people or public opinion that ruled the country." The Kikuyu stateless society "continued to function favorably until it was smashed by the British government, which introduced a system of government very similar to the autocratic government which the Kikuyu people had discarded many centuries ago." The British imperialists appointed chiefs to overlook the people and set up a tyranny resting on centralization. Kenyatta helped form Mau Mau to destroy this, for: "In the eyes of the Kikuyu people, the submission to a despotic rule of any particular man or a group, white or black, is the greatest humiliation to mankind." [2]

The Kikuyu anarchist tradition which culminated in the Mau Mau Revolution has been best described in the book by Donald L. Barnett and Karari Njama, *Mau Mau from Within: An Analysis of Kenya's Peasant Revolt*. [3] The latter author being a major participant; virtually all other works on the subject were written by white racist sycophants of British imperialism. Early in the work Barnett queries:

Were there, it might now be asked, any peculiar features of traditional Kikuyu society which help explain this people's independent response and,